

# General Study Of Philippians – Part 1

**The purpose of this letter written by Paul in prison was to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent Paul and to strengthen these believers by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone.**

**Philippians 1:1-2** [New King James] *“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**This is a personal letter to the Christians in Philippi, not intended for general circulation. Paul wanted to let them know that he was full of joy despite his imprisonment and the forthcoming trial.**

In this letter Paul counselled the Christians at Philippi about humility and unity and warned them about potential problems

Because of his imprisonment Paul had to write letters to teach and so encourage them in their Christian life.

Fortunately, Paul had a team of volunteers [including Timothy, Mark and Epaphras] who personally delivered his letters and often remained with each congregation for a while to teach and encourage them.

**The church in Philippi consisted mostly of Gentile [non-Jewish] believers who were not familiar with the Old Testament, so he did not quote from it in his letter.**

**“Grace”** is the undeserved favour of God, which reconciles us to Him through Jesus Christ, supplying our every need and allows us the privilege of serving Him.

**“Peace”** is more than the absence of conflict, it is complete wellbeing, and comes only from God the Father through our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 1:3-6** [New King James] *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”*

Paul often joins praise and prayer and sees this as shared joy.

This is the first of many times that Paul uses the word “joy” in his letters.

We need to understand the Greek difference between “happiness” and “joy”.

**“Happiness”** – is dependent on physical things and circumstances, both of which can change and take away the happiness they brought to us.

**“Joy”** – is one of the “fruits” of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, [Galatians 5:22] it is eternal and is **not** taken from us by loss of physical positions or circumstances changing.

**Such joy is created by the knowledge of God’s purpose for human life and His way of life that is shown us in His Word, the Christian Bible, opened to our understanding by the Holy Spirit, [John 16:13; John 14:26].**

Note also that the Holy Spirit will “*tell you things to come*” that is to show us the world tomorrow, after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, this time as King of kings, [**Revelation 19:16**] using the total power and authority He has been given by God the Father, [**Matthew 28:18**] and bring real lasting peace to this world as ruling Prince of Peace, [**Isaiah 9:6-7**].

This is what is in the mind of Paul every time he uses the word “joy”; remember this every time we read the word “joy” in the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

**Philippians 1:7-11** [New King James] “*just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*”

“**Grace**” here has two or perhaps three meanings.

The privilege of being called to make the gospel message known to others, [**Ephesians 3:7**] Paul linked the Christians in the church in Philippi [**Philippians 1:1**]. Also the strength to enable Paul and the Philippians Christians alike to do this work.

Such enabling is necessary because this work of the gospel was costing Paul imprisonment and the suffering that the Church would experience as they are involved in helping people be sure of the truth, God’s Word, the Christian Bible, and the power of that word in their lives, and their defence of the gospel message, [**1 Corinthians 1:6**] by their lives were different to unbelievers.

Paul’s prayer was for the Philippian church to “*abound in love*” and in “*the knowledge*” of God’s way of life, and “*discernment*” of what is good and what is evil in the world, [**1 John 4:1-6**].

“**Righteousness**” – Paul wants the Philippians to live at no lower standard than that of absolute purity, their whole lives filled with good works, thus being well-prepared for the day of Jesus Christ’s return as “*King of kings and Lord of lords,*” [**Revelation 19:16**].

**This righteousness can only come through faith in what Jesus Christ has done for all humanity, [verse 11] not our own “righteousness” by good works, [Isaiah 64:6].**

**Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24** [New King James] “*For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*” ... “*Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*” ... “*who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,*”

**We have to follow the example of Abraham who had total faith in what God had promised without and physical proof, [Hebrews 11:8-12].**

**Philippians 1:12-18** [New King James] “*But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The*

*former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”*

Paul’s imprisonment had not been a loss but a gain as far as the preaching of the gospel message.

The very fact that it was known why this Roman citizen was in prison as a result of the preaching of the gospel message, brought many to repentance and gave courage and confidence to other Christians to preach the same message.

**For Paul to be confined and in all probability chained to a Roman soldier day and night, allowed Paul to preach the gospel to not only the soldiers but through them their families and friends, [verse 13].**

Those who preached Jesus Christ with differing motives, such as the “*Judaizers*” mentioned in **Philippians 3:2**, did **not** worry Paul, for he lifts the whole matter beyond all personalities, all that mattered to Paul that the message that Jesus Christ brought to all humanity from God the Father was preached, [verse 18].

**Philippians 1:19-26** [New King James] *“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”*

**These verses show the total dedication of Paul to the work given to him by Jesus Christ. There was nothing else of any real value in his life.**

**All of Paul’s confidence in the future was bound-up in the work of preaching the gospel message.**

**Paul was living proof of the challenge he gave to the church at Rome and all true Christians.**

**Romans 12:1-2** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

The sacrifice indicated in these verses is the “*burnt offering sacrifice for sin*” when all of the animal offered was burnt up on the altar. Also the Greek word translated “*bodies*” is “*soma*” meaning the total life force, body, mind and human spirit, [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**]. It is only when this step is taken by a person that the Holy Spirit can begin to re-educate them and convert them into a true Christian, filled with the very character of the Eternal Creator God, [**Galatians 5:22-25**].

Paul weighs up in his mind now the two alternatives and can rejoice in both.

To go on living in this world, even when restricted by his imprisonment, is to live in constant enjoyment of working for his Saviour and Master Jesus Christ and any further fruit of that partnership.

On the other hand he knows that death is also sheer gain, for beyond death is the awaiting in the grave, freed from pressure and pain. Awaiting His resurrection into a wonderful world that will be ruled by Jesus Christ and he will be able to work with the One he loves so dearly once again, [**Revelation 20:4**].

Paul does **not** know which of these alternatives God will grant, but he begins to feel that he is being called to remain for further service, helping others to make spiritual progress in their lives, [**verses 24-25**].

**Philippians 1:27-30** [New King James] *“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.”*

Trust in their Lord Jesus Christ and forgetfulness of themselves will mean that they will not be terrified by their opponents.

**Their fearlessness will show their enemies that they are not strengthened by human courage but that to oppose them as servants of Jesus Christ is to fight against God, [Acts 5:39] and to take a path that will lead to their destruction, [2 Thessalonians 1:4-8].**

Perhaps as Paul wrote these words he recalls the voice of God in his own conscience indicating how he had persecuted Christians, [**Acts 26:9-18**].

It was the privilege for the Christians in Philippi to believe in Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for that knowledge and the resulting new life, [**Matthew 5:11; Acts 5:41**].

Our calling as Christians is to accept that toil and struggle, and its cost, as part of that calling, as it had been for the apostle Paul, [**2 Corinthians 11:23-28**].

This *“conflict”* Greek word used is *“agōn”* meaning struggle, anguish, strive, agony, contention, fight, race, is used frequently by Paul, [**Romans 15:30; Colossians 1:29; Colossians 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:2**] as it so deeply expressed the nature of Christian service.